

## A PATHOGRAPHY ON THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH: GIUSEPPE VERDI DIED FROM STROKE\*

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This year, the whole world is celebrating the musical genius of Giuseppe Verdi, probably the greatest opera composer in the history of music.

Giuseppe Verdi was born in 1813 to a country inn-keeper, by coincidence in the very same year as Richard Wagner, the greatest German opera composer. His father was not able to provide Verdi the education he aspired for. So he turned to his benefactor Barezzi, who had great understanding for his musical talent. Verdi married Margherita, Barezzi's daughter. Margherita later died from meningitis and both their children died from infantile enteric diseases typical for the time, which Verdi took to his heart very much.

Local organist Cavaletti gave him his first instrument, a small spinet which was renovated especially for him. Slowly he realized that his native town, Busetto, inhibited him, so he moved to Milan where he was not admitted to the conservatory.

His first opera «Oberto» was performed in 1839, when he was 26 years old, and his first real success was «Nabucco» in 1842, which made him a favorite of the whole Italy. Verdi preferred secluded rather than pompous life, as he needed peace and quiet for his creativity. He settled down in the beautiful place of Sant'Agata. There he stayed for almost half of his life with his friend and wife-to-be, Giuseppina

Streponi. In 1847, he composed «Macbeth». Around 1850, his three romantic masterpieces, «Rigoletto», «Il Trovatore» and «La Traviata», were performed. They finally brought him lasting international recognition of his work, following his first national success. Later operas were not so successful, still including «Don Carlos» and «Masquerade». Nearing his sixties, Verdi gave the world his masterpiece «Aida», a spectacular opera including many of his most lyric inspirations. In 1874, after the death of the writer Manzoni, whom Verdi deeply respected, he composed one of his rare nonopera works, «Requiem». When after «Aida» his work seemed to be completed, he started to cooperate with former Wagner's follower Boito, who was an excellent librettist and composer himself. So he got two outstanding librettos and composed his final pearls, «Othello» at the age of 75, and finally «Falstaff» at the age of 80. He spent his eighties all alone after death of his wife.

Giuseppe Verdi was rather introverted but it only covered his real ambitions and self-esteem. He was a rather unconventional, independent and quarrelsome person, often full of rage. He had a strong character but also frequent noncreative periods. As a person, he was mostly healthy and calm, somewhat depressive. He was of asthenic and thin appearance, and pox-marked – the reason why he always had his beard. During his life, he had few long periods of headache and frequently sore throat. He suffered from nervous gastric troubles and rheumatic pains, which worsened with time in his limbs and spine. In 1877, he asked for medical help in Monte Carlo because of chronic bronchitis. He started to have frequent short episodes of dizziness. Just before he performed «Falstaff», he almost died from influenza. After his second wife had died, he was desperately lonely, spending most of the time in spa. He did some

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caritative work helping the hospital in Villanova and Casa di Riposto, a nursing home for retired musicians in Milan. He moved from Sant'Agata to a hotel in Milan, a palace in Genoa, a rest home in Monte Catini, and backwards. During his last months, he was weak, alone, and sad.

By the end of January 1901, while he was feeling relatively well, his maid found him unconscious. He had right extremities paralyzed and when he regained consciousness, he had global aphasia. Despite all help he got from physicians of Milan and Florence, they could not prevent his death one week later – it was a massive stroke in the left hemisphere. This severe stroke came as a relief after a series of prior minor strokes or transient ischemic attacks. It took Verdi, who had already been long gone as a creator, ending his life in his 88<sup>th</sup> year.

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